

THE  
HOOSAC TUNNEL BILL

AND

ITS EFFECT ON NEW ENGLAND.

*By  
W. L. Keith C.E.*

---

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY RAND, AVERY, & Co.

1875.



## THE HOOSAC TUNNEL BILL, AND ITS EFFECT ON NEW ENGLAND.

---

I HAD the pleasure of listening to Mr. Adams's lecture on the Hoosac Tunnel, and have carefully examined the valuable report of the corporators, their bill, and compared it with that of the able committee of eleven to whom it was referred ; but yet I cannot see in either of the bills proposed, which are essentially the same in those sections to which I wish to refer, any thing to prevent the Hoosac Tunnel, with all its consolidated line, from falling under the control of the New York Central Railroad Company in less than five years.

The bills reported are as follows : Section 1 authorizes the Governor and Council to appoint five persons as directors for one, two, three, four, and five years respectively, and one person thereafter each year as a vacancy occurs. Sects. 2 and 3 of the corporators' bill partially define their duties. Sects. 4, 5 and 6, which are essentially the same as Sect. 4 of the new bill, read as follows : —

SECT. 4. The board of directors provided for in Sect. 1 of this act shall, as soon as possible after entering upon their duties, proceed to negotiate with the corporations owning or operating railroads, forming a through railroad-line from a point or points in Eastern Massachusetts, to points in the eastern part of the State of New York, by way of the Hoosac Tunnel, with a view to the early consolidation of such roads under one management.

SECT. 5. The directors of the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel, and

Western Railroad Company are hereby authorized to consolidate and unite the franchises by this act placed in their charge, with the franchises and properties of other corporations, forming parts of a through line, as provided in the preceding section ; or, if necessary, to lease the same, if beyond the limits of the State, upon such terms as may be agreed upon, subject always to the ratification and approval of the Governor and Council, and also of the stockholders of any private corporation concerned, at a meeting called for the purpose ; *provided* that the name of such consolidated corporation shall be the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel, and Western Railroad Company ; and provided also, that its entire capital stock, and bonded and other indebtedness, shall not, at the time of consolidation, exceed                    millions of dollars.

Now, what will be the natural result of such a bill ? We will suppose the Governor and Council appoint five directors, and that their judgment is infallible, and their integrity beyond question. These five directors immediately proceed, under Sects. 4 and 5, to negotiate with the Fitchburg Railroad Company for a lease or consolidation : to lease it, they have got to insure the dividends, and probably the same would be the case with the Massachusetts Central Company ; this we think the Commonwealth not prepared to do.

We will next suppose the almost improbable case, that a consolidation with either the Fitchburg or Massachusetts Central road is effected under the bill, by throwing in the Tunnel and Troy and Greenfield Railroad at a very small valuation : we will suppose the lines in New York and elsewhere leased, and that every thing desirable is accomplished ; that the corporation elects its president, and proceeds to business.

So far I have taken it for granted that the judgment of the Governor and Council is infallible, and that the corporation is formed and its directors chosen, — all such men as Boston and the Commonwealth would desire.

Hereafter two new directors are chosen each year, one by the Governor and Council, and one by the Corporation. How

385.4  
T 75 K  
pam



long may we be sure of a majority in the true interest of the Commonwealth. The chances are largely against it. The Governor and Council will be a prize for the New York Central Railroad Company; the stock will be marketable, and will be purchased in their interest; and within three years it is possible for a majority of the directors of the consolidated corporation to be in the interest of the New York Central Company, and a perpetual lease effected, whereby the Tunnel and whole consolidated line is forever after part and parcel of the Boston and Albany and New York Central Line.

Now, is there any method of utilizing the Tunnel, and the forty or more miles of Railroad belonging to the State, whereby this danger can be avoided and the people of the Commonwealth insured the use and benefit expected from the Tunnel? I think there is; and that is the toll-gate plan.

I do not propose to present a bill, as I am not a lawyer, but wish to offer a few simple suggestions. 1st, that the Governor and Council appoint an able Superintendent and Treasurer of the Troy and Greenfield Railroad, and the Tunnel; that they have charge of all the Troy and Greenfield Railroad and Tunnel property belonging to the State, with power to finish the Tunnel, and straighten and double-track the road, and arrange the running of trains over said Railroad by any corporation that may choose to connect, and to fix and collect such reasonable tolls per car and passenger as will give the State its proportionate rate per mile run, after deducting the cost of motive power and to pay monthly into the State Treasury such surplus sums as may be received over and above what is required to keep the said Road and Tunnel in first class condition. This keeps the Tunnel in the hands of the State without a chance of any adverse interests ever getting possession. We will then suppose the Fitchburg and Massachusetts Central Roads each to seek its separate lines, west of the Troy and Greenfield Railroad, for a consolidated line. The State treats both alike, so far as the Troy and Greenfield Railroad is concerned, and can afford to give them both lower

rates than if it was a part of one consolidated line; and will at the same time receive a larger interest from its Tunnel investment, and more largely increase the growth of the manufacturing interests of the Commonwealth, which Mr. Adams so truly states is the most important interest for the railroad to develop. This disposition of the Tunnel question enables the Fitchburg and Massachusetts Central Roads, each to make a consolidated line as far as it wishes. The Tunnel is no hindrance. Each pays its tolls, and runs its own trains over consolidated lines as far west as it wishes; each supplies the section through which it passes; and both supply a large section of Eastern Massachusetts. One or both of them may become the property of adverse interests; but the chances are much smaller than under the plan of consolidation proposed by the corporators, because it is necessary to control two powerful lines, with a prospect of still another, if the Tunnel is in the hands of the State.

The interests of a population more than double that served by the Boston and Albany Railroad would be served by these two lines; and the total cost of the Tunnel and two lines will be several millions less than double that of the Boston and Albany Road, with double track and equipment equally good.

I think the people of the Commonwealth, and the Legislature, cannot be too careful in examining thoroughly the bill they pass on this important question. Many are interested in the labor-question, the liquor-law, or their own local interests, and think little and care less of this most important matter.

Having shown above the natural result to which the bill now pending in the Legislature would tend, if passed, and that the corporation formed by consolidation with the Troy and Greenfield Railroad as a part, is weaker and more liable to fall into adverse hands than if the State held said Troy and Greenfield Railroad and its Tunnel in its possession, with power to hold in check and regulate any use of said line adverse to the interests of the Commonwealth, I propose to show its bearing on the railroad system of a large portion of

New England. We will now suppose the consolidated Tunnel Line to be officered by a majority of directors in the interest of the New York Central and Boston and Albany Roads, as would most certainly be the case in a short time under the present bill.

We will suppose the Fitchburg Road a part of the consolidated line, under the control of the New York Central and Boston and Albany companies: will it be natural for this interest to spend much money in straightening double-tracking &c., for another line, when they have one in such good condition as the Boston and Albany Road, capable of doing all the through business which the New York Central wishes to divert from New York City? I think it unreasonable to suppose such a thing.

The Fitchburg consolidated Tunnel line would be used as a local road, and for such portion of the through freight as could be spared that way. We next have the unfinished Massachusetts Central Road, which on the toll-gate plan could become another strong trunk-line to the West, but in this case would certainly be at the mercy of this powerful corporation.

We next come to the Poughkeepsie Bridge route to the coal-fields, which might, if built, and its connections made, become the means of supplying all interior New England with coal at one dollar less per ton than at present, besides being the best line for connecting with the Pennsylvania Central, and Baltimore and Ohio Roads, and the South and South-west. Three lines from Boston will reach this bridge; viz., Massachusetts Central, the Boston and Albany (over the New Haven and Northampton, Connecticut Western, and Poughkeepsie and Eastern,) and the New York and New England (*via* Waterbury or the Connecticut Western). This bridge would be the next point of attack by the New York Central Company, which would bring to its aid the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, which leases the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, with such men as John Jacob Astor, Thomas Cor-

nell, J. P. Morgan, A. A. Low, and others, very largely interested in the development of New York City, as directors. Their interests would be adverse to the building of this bridge, as they easily reach Albany now by the Albany and Susquehanna Road.

The bridge would more readily help their rivals, the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western, Pennsylvania Central, Erie, and Baltimore and Ohio Railroads.

Now, all this is the natural and probable result of the passage of any bill for a consolidation of the State's interest in the Troy and Greenfield Railroad and Hoosac Tunnel. It would force business to Albany and New York, thence over the Boston and Albany road, as a well-developed, double-track line, with terminal facilities all developed. The Fitchburg line would have such as could be spared; and the natural interest of the New York Central Road would be to carry its business over the Hudson and Harlem River Railroads to New York City, where they are now making unsurpassed terminal facilities; and the people of Massachusetts, and a large part of New England, would be forced to receive their freight over the New York Central, and Boston and Albany, or New York City, and thence by water.

These two points command the entire and Western and South-western trade of New England, and then there remain only the Montreal and Ogdensburg lines. Are the people and their representatives prepared for such a result?


My description may appear visionary and improbable; but it is the natural result of a consolidation of the State's interest in the Troy and Greenfield Railroad, and the Tunnel, as proposed by the bill now before the Legislature.

It is human nature to do what is best for itself. Will the New York Central, and Boston and Albany Roads, and the City of New York, let such an opportunity go by without an effort? I think not, and would warn the people of this Commonwealth that a consolidation, with the Hoosac Tunnel as a part, is a consolidation with the New York Central Railroad,



that it is for their interest to keep the trade of New England on their line, and that it will be done if possible; and rates always kept a little behind New York City.

H. F. KEITH, *Civil Engineer.*



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2017 with funding from  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Alternates



3 0112 105326380

